

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 BIB-01 SY-05 MCT-01 AID-05 /071 W
-----019853 012000Z /43

R 011229Z DEC 77
FM AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2129
INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

C O N F I D E N T I A L HELSINKI 2823

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, FI
SUBJECT: ARSON ATTACK ON LEFTIST NEWSPAPER

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. SUMMARY. ARSON AND A BUNGLED BOMBING ATTEMPT AGAINST THE PRINTING PLANT OF THE LEFT-COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER TIEDONANTAJA BY AN ALLEGED FASCIST GROUP HAVE GENERATED CRITICISM OF FINNISH GOVERNMENT "LAXITY" AND A DEMAND BY TIEDONANTAJA THAT THE FINNISH GOVERNMENT PAY FOR THE DAMAGE. END SUMMARY.

2. A FIRE EARLY NOVEMBER 26 DAMAGED THE PRINTING PLANT OF TIEDONANTAJA, ORGAN OF THE HARDLINE MINORITY FAC- TION OF THE FINNISH COMMUNIST PARTY, AND DESTROYED ONE EDITION OF THE SWEDISH-LANGUAGE VERSION OF THE PAPER. FIREMEN FOUND AN UNEXPLODED HOMEMADE BOMB IN THE DEBRIS, AND BOTH CRIMINAL POLICE AND SECURITY POLICE WERE CALLED IN TO INVESTIGATE THE CLEAR CASE OF ARSON.

3. TIEDONANTAJA'S EDITOR PROMPTLY CLAIMED THAT THE FIRE WAS "POLITICAL SABOTAGE" AND SUBSEQUENT EDITIONS OF THE PAPER PLAYED HEAVILY ON THE THEME THAT
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"FASCISTS" HAD CARRIED OUT EARLIER THREATS AGAINST THE PAPER. ON NOVEMBER 28, COMMUNIST PARTY VICE CHAIRMAN SINISALO, HEAD OF THE LEFT-WING MINORITY, AND THE EDITOR CALLED ON INTERIOR MINISTER UUSITALO TO DEMAND GOVERN- MENT COMPENSATION FOR THE DAMAGES. THEY CLAIMED THAT THE FINNISH GOVERNMENT IS RESPONSIBLE UNDER THE 1947 PARIS PEACE TREATY FOR ANY DESTRUCTION CAUSED BY FASCIST

ELEMENTS, AS "FINLAND HAS COMMITTED ITSELF TO CURBING FASCIST ACTIVITIES." THEY ACCUSED THE POLICE OF IGNORING THE EARLIER THREATS, INCLUDING THE APPEARANCE OF SWASTIKAS ON THE WALLS OF THE BUILDING TWO WEEKS BEFORE.

4. THE REST OF THE FINNISH PRESS REGARDED THE ARSON AS A SERIOUS MATTER. SWEDISH-LANGUAGE HUFVUDSTADSBLADET CALLED IT THE FIRST ATTACK AGAINST FREEDOM OF THE PRESS IN FINLAND SINCE 1930. SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PAPER DEMARI, OBSERVING THAT THERE HAS BEEN A RIGHTWARD SHIFT IN FINLAND, SAID "THIS COUNTRY HAS NO ROOM FOR FASCISTS." COMMUNIST PARTY DAILY KANSAN UTUSET DECLARED THAT "WITHOUT OVERESTIMATING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF FASCIST TERRORISTS, THEIR ACTIVITY HAS GONE FAR ENOUGH THAT THE AUTHORITIES MUST PUT AN END TO IT."

5. POLICE ANNOUNCED NOVEMBER 29 THAT ONE SUSPECT HAD BEEN ARRESTED IN TURKU, AND THE PRESS HAS LINKED HIM WITH RIGHTIST EXTREMIST ORGANIZATIONS WHICH WERE BANNED BY THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR EARLIER THIS MONTH FOLLOWING A COMMUNIST-INITIATED PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY. END UNCLASSIFIED.

6. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL. RELIABLE SOURCES HAVE IDENTIFIED THE SUSPECT IN THE ARSON CASE AS TIMO PEKKALA, A MEMBER
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OF A NEO-FASCIST GROUP IN TURKU. THIS GROUP, CONSISTING OF AN ESTIMATED 25-30 SOCIAL MISFITS ON THE EXTREME RIGHT FRINGE, CONSTITUTED THE MEMBERSHIP OF FOUR DIFFERENT ORGANIZATIONS BANNED EARLIER THIS MONTH ON THE GROUNDS THAT THEY WERE UNREGISTERED. POLICE BELIEVE PEKKALA WAS ACTING ALONE AND THAT HIS ACTION DOES NOT REPRESENT A WAVE OF FASCIST RESURGENCE IN FINLAND. NONETHELESS, THE ATTACK ON THE NEWSPAPER HAS GIVEN TIEDONANTAJA--AND OTHERS--AN OPPORTUNITY TO ACCUSE THE GOVERNMENT OF LACK OF VIGILANCE AGAINST EXTREMISTS, AND THE CRITICS WILL BE WATCHING CAREFULLY TO SEE HOW THE GOVERNMENT DISPOSES OF THE CASE.
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RIDGWAY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ARSON, NEWSPAPERS, TERRORISTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 01-Dec-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977HELSIN02823
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770446-0250
Format: TEL
From: HELSINKI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t197712106/aaaadltz.tel
Line Count: 108
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 9afacefb-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 114529
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ARSON ATTACK ON LEFTIST NEWSPAPER
TAGS: PINT, FI
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/9afacefb-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009